

September 8, 2000: Commission Announces Hearings on Religious Freedom in India, Pakistan

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 8, 2000 Contact:

Lawrence J. Goodrich, Communications Director, (202) 523-3240

WHAT: The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom will hold hearings on religious freedom in India and Pakistan **WHEN:** Monday, Sept. 18, 2000, 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. **WHERE:** Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearing room, 419 Dirksen Office Building **WHO:** Witnesses include Ainsley Embree, professor emeritus at Columbia University; Ghulam Nabi Fai, Kashmir American Council; Mumtaz Ali Khan, an expert on Muslim minorities in India; John Dayal, a representative of Indian Christians; Mumtaz Ahmad, professor at Hampton University, Hampton, Va.; Mohan Shahani, a Pakistani human rights lawyer; James Channan, a Roman Catholic priest in Pakistan; Mujeeb Rahman, a representative of the Ahmadiyya Muslim community; Marshall Bouton, executive vice president of the Asia Society; Sumit Ganguly, professor at the University of Texas; and Robert Oakley, former U.S. ambassador to Pakistan. **BACKGROUND:** Since the rise to power of the Bharatiya Janata Party in 1998, assaults on India's religious minorities by self-proclaimed Hindu nationalists have substantially increased in a number of states. Christian converts have been intimidated, churches and schools burned, nuns raped, priests and missionaries murdered. Muslims continue to be targets of vandalism and assault. In Pakistan, large numbers of Sunni Muslims, Ahmadis and Christians have been harassed, detained, and imprisoned on account of their religion under laws that prohibit blasphemy and essentially criminalize adherence to the Ahmadi faith. In April of this year, the military government abandoned its expressed intent to soften the blasphemy laws. The Commission will hear testimony on these situations as well as options for U.S. policy towards India and Pakistan.

Hon. Elliott Abrams, Chair

- Dr. Firuz Kazemzadeh, Vice Chair Rabbi David Saperstein Laila Al-Marayati, M.D. Hon. John R. Bolton Dean Michael K. Young Archbishop Theodore E. McCarrick Nina Shea Justice Charles Z. Smith Ambassador Robert Seiple, Ex-Officio Steven T. McFarland, Executive Director